

Death and Judgment

by Rolfe Barnard

Death and judgment are inevitable, and people must repent and put their faith in Christ to avoid eternal judgment.

Duration: 53:25

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 12:7, Mark 9:43-48, John 3:16, John 14:6, Acts 4:12, Romans 3:23, 2 Corinthians 5:10, 1 Thessalonians 4:14, Hebrews 9:27, Revelation 20:14-15

Topics: "Death", "Judgment", "Salvation"

Description

Rolfe Barnard's sermon 'Death and Judgment' emphasizes the inevitability of death and the subsequent judgment that every person must face. He reflects on how recent televised funerals have momentarily captured the world's attention to this reality, yet people quickly return to their daily lives, ignoring the truth that 'it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.' Barnard passionately urges listeners to recognize their need for Christ, as He is the only hope against the finality of death and the terror of judgment. He recounts personal experiences with death and the urgency of repentance, imploring the congregation to seek salvation before it's too late.

Transcript

In the last five years, you have been privileged to witness many things, but one thing especially, that no other generation of people have ever gotten a thousand miles of. D.E.A.T.H. death has been televised around the encircling globe at least three times in the last five years. When President John F. Kennedy was assassinated, the television went out of business for four or five days and did only one thing, conduct a funeral service attended by the heads of governments, communists, Buddhists, Mohammedists, so-called Christians, from around the world.

America went on a religious binge, the like of which history is never known. In more recent days, Senator John F. Kennedy was assassinated, and again, with not quite so much coverage, but the world attended the funeral of a senator of the United States. A little before that, the Negro leader Martin Luther King, at which people all over the world, through the medium of television, were brought face to face with the last enemy of mankind, the enemy that has not been abolished yet, D.E.A.T.H. This dumb preacher was foolish enough to hope that an impression would have been made on people today that it's appointed unto men once to die, and after that to judgment.

Your children watched the four or five day funeral procession, you did, and in two weeks the world went back to business as usual and forgot that when we get down to brass tacks, there's just one reason, fundamental, beans and cornbread, elemental, why Jesus died on a cross. And that is because men have to die, and after they die, they are brought to judgment. In language that we don't need to interpret, we are told, and as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after that to judgment.

For that reason, because that appointment has been made, and God made it, and because he's appointed that men die, and that death introduces them to a meeting with a thrice holy God. The scripture says, so, because of that, Christ was once offered to bear the sins of men. Now that's just two and two makes four, don't have to be smart to understand that.

If in our philosophizing we leave out this, we are dead wrong. I wish somebody this morning would go in this building, panicked by the grace and mercy of God, washed in the powerful life-lead down blood of God the Son, vitally united to a living Lord. Because you've got to die, and you've got to come to the judgment.

I wish this next week, if the week has not brought you to the place, doing a good deal of praying for yourself, I want you under God to pray for me. Oh, the burden, the crush of living in a day when people live and like to never will die. When it seems we've got smart, we know everything except the very elemental thing.

When we're trying to convince somebody to need Jesus for some other reason, I'll tell you why you need the merits of what he did, placed over against your account, because you're going to die. You're going to die, and you're going to come to the judgment. In my first pastorate, I brought the first sermon ever delivered in the city of Border, Texas, 50,000 people, no church.

And I preached in the biggest saloon in the city, had seven professions of faith, took them and two others that I could find in that city of 50,000 people, organized the Baptist church, baptized them, and they constituted their charter members. I preached to them on 7th verse of the 12th chapter of Ecclesiastes, the whole chapter's description of a funeral procession like the which we saw on television three times in our days. It's the picture of a funeral procession going down the street while everybody's singing in a low note.

While a man goes to his long home, and then the conclusion of the whole business reads like this, Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit to God who gave it. And I preached to those people gathered there to trap me and embarrass me. I was trying to raise money, and I was having to get it from the saloon and gaming crowd, couldn't find anybody else.

And they said they wouldn't give me any money until they heard me and got a sample of my preaching, and they stood me up on a beer keg, and took pictures and surrounded me with deputy sheriffs and all of that. And I preached to them on what's certain for men and women in the future. I'll tell you what's certain, death.

And I'll tell you what's certain, judgment. And I preached on what God Almighty has done about that. I'll tell you what he's done.

Mercy upon mercy. Grace upon grace. Glory upon glory.

Wish we could believe it instead of accept it. God hung the son of his love on a tree. And he put sin on him.

And I don't understand it, I can quote it but can't explain it. He not only put sin on him, but he made him to be sin. And he did it for sinners.

And I've read with men and women in the concept of fear. Don't make certain you die out of Christ. Don't come to the judgment and have to deal with these hands.

For the law of God and the God of the law. Most terrible thing that this preacher can possibly conceive of. He'd have to stand yonder at the time when men cannot escape.

Howsoever hard they try, saith the word of God. When men shall seek to hide and call for the rocks and mountains to fall upon them. To hide them from the face of him that sits on the throne.

That time when the great of the earth, the kings and the great of the earth. Shall seek to be missing when mankind is summoned. To face the God of law.

And to have to deal with that law himself. When the man that God used as a channel through which he gave the law couldn't keep it himself, Moses. And fell under his sanction and his penalty.

And needed a bloody substitute or hell for him. Oh, if I just had one sermon and I could get somebody to listen to me. Stand on the street corner and have worldwide television and radio.

And every human being in the world listen. That would be the only thing to ever hear from God. Before they went out yonder.

I tell you what I'd do. I'd beg them. I'd storm at them as I would you this morning.

I'd plead with them. Whatever else you do bud. All your little alibis I've heard them.

All your excuses I've heard them. All your reasons I expect they're pretty good. But in God's name and for your own sake.

Don't risk facing God. And having to look at yourself in the mirror of his holy law that you never would look at down here. And have it like Samson rending the lion's jaws.

Have that thrice holy good and just and perfect law of the earth. Tear you apart and leave you guilty. And headed for hell and then for hell.

Oh with the judgment. Men are going to have to grapple. With a law that's so holy.

That even an omniscient or wise God. Couldn't find but one or two ways to deal with it. Hang his own son up.

And turn him over to his law. And watch his laws stamp out the very life blood of the king of Lorax. Or send everybody to hell.

Even God has never found a way to deal with God's holy law. Except to enforce his awful penalty. You got to die.

For the first sixteen months of my little ministry. I knew no theology. I've been an infidel for six years.

I went into the public ministry as soon as God saved me. That's all I've ever known. But I lived with death.

I was the only preacher in that old city of 50,000 people. I averaged three funerals a day. Preaching three funerals a day.

For sixteen months. Then after sixteen months they sent a young preacher in and started the Methodist church. But for sixteen months the only preacher in that city of sin.

50,000 people. Almost as crazy as the people of Houston and Pasadena. Almost as mad after everything except the things that count.

Oh, I lived with death. Until I was burned in my soul a little while. A little bit.

This very commonplace proposition. That I guess is the hardest thing for any human being to actually believe. I almost learned that people die.

I just almost learned that people die. God taught the dead so he hung his son on the cross. I wish I could recover.

I'm getting so smart it ain't worth killing. Know so much truth. My shotgun shoots at everybody and hits nobody.

I wish I could call myself and you back. Things have their place. Truth has its place and season.

But what this generation of people this pastor is asking you to get involved with. Yonder in that apartment house and home and where you work. What this generation desperately needs to face.

And somebody going to have to face them with it. Is that the desperate reason they need to get afraid. And need to become seekers.

And need to seek till they find. And take not know for an answer. The reason men desperately need to lay hold on God's son.

Is because they got to die. And come to the judgment men die. Men die.

You can't live as I did going from one funeral to another. From one house of ill fame or gaming place or saloon. Or county hospital or courthouse or on the streets.

As I did holding the hands of men and women who died by the dozens every day in that ungodly city. Every last one of them none of them knew my name. But when they had lost all hope that they could recover.

Inevitably they kept me running my legs off by saying somebody go get the preacher. And if somebody would sit beside their bed many times. As the ghost of a godless rebellious infidel life.

As the ghost of a wasted life. Trapped up and down on their beds. I'd hold their hands as they begged me to keep them out of hell.

People die. I suggest we never get far away from just this elemental fact. The gospel story is not an option.

Christ is not a convenience. He's an utter necessity. For it's appointed unto men once to die.

And then the judgment. People die physically. This whole heart quits ticking.

The next breath that the bible says comes from god doesn't come. And they take what they call people out for health reasons. Put them deeply enough under the sod.

So as their bodies rot. Our air will not become even more polluted than it is now. And we seek to put flowers on the grave.

But there's no way you can make it beautiful. It's ugly. It's final.

It brings men to face God. I wish I could come out there and put my arm around you. Beg you, don't die.

Like you are now. Don't make out like you don't believe there's a supreme God. You know there is.

Don't tell me nothing to it. You know there is. You know you're not a hog or a dog or a cat.

You know that the fact that there isn't anybody listening now that doesn't have tremendous responsibilities in many different directions is all the proof you need that you're more than an animal. If you're more than an animal, you're a responsible creature who got here some way and you didn't do it yourself. Oh, I wish I could sit down beside you in this fastest-growing section to tell me in God's earth where people come here as they did to the oil city to make money.

Oh, I wish I could constrain you that it's not nice to die without God, to die without hope. It's not nice. Dixie was the queen of the dance hall girls of that wicked city, 27 years old, been married and divorced seven times.

She brought a man up to my little study one time, wanted me to perform a marriage ceremony, and I wouldn't do it. She cussed me out. Went and got somebody else.

Not long after that, that beautiful queen, saying it not yet shown in her face, lovely, lovely, beautiful. She was in the arms of a man on the dance floor of the public 25-cent dance hall. Another man came, and the commotion started, and the gun went off.

Instead of hitting the other man, it lodged into the vitals of Dixie. And they took her to the hospital, and after a while, my phone rang, and they said, Dixie, everybody knew Dixie, Preacher Dixie's dying, and she's calling for you. And I went to that hospital room where that beautiful young lady lay.

The doctor left, and the nurse let me in the room. She whispered, I'll leave you alone. She's only a few minutes left, and you can't hurt her.

And I went and sat beside the dying Dixie. And I began to say, Dixie. And at first she was so near gone, she didn't hear me.

And then she was aroused a little bit. And in a bleary sort of way, she says, is that you, Preacher? I said, yes, Dixie. I said, Dixie, you sent for me.

What can I do for you? And she said, Dixie, she said, Brother Preacher, call me Brother Preacher. I'm dying, and I'm afraid to die. Best God, I hope you never get to where you're so smart.

You wouldn't be afraid to die without hope, and without God. And she said, Preacher, don't let me go to hell. Now, don't sit out there and tell me you don't believe all that foolishness about hell.

You know there's a hell. Sin brings hell right here on this earth. God would have to make the whole thing different if there's any different in the life to come.

You know. She said, don't let me go to hell. It's an awful pity that you and I live in a day when nobody talked that way until they just got about three or four breaths left.

Don't let me go to hell! And if you've got a heart, that'll sort of break it. Don't let me go to hell. And I had to say to Dixie, I can't keep you out of hell.

Well, she said, for God's sake, pray for me, Preacher. I said, Dixie, it appears to me it's too late to pray! Well, she said, my God, Preacher, I've got to be a little while late, and I don't want to go to hell! It's too late to pray! Is there any hope for me? And I said, yes. This is unbelievable, my folks, this morning.

This is unexplainable. And I said to her, Dixie, if in your last dying breath and strength you could lay hold of the Christ of the gospel, that'd be hope. That's the wonder and the incredibility of the grace of God.

And she said, for God's sake, Preacher, how could I do that? And I said, the gospel is the death and enthronement of Jesus Christ and the command to repent. And I said, there's just one hope for you, Dixie. God commands people to repent.

There's never been anybody saved yet who missed out here. And don't get in a theological argument here when you're dealing with a sinner! Oh, hear me! God knows if you can repent in your own strength, take to it, brother. And if you find you can't, become a seeker after God's grace and mercy that he'll grant you the ability to turn on yourself and agree with God and take your place as a guilty sinner with only one plea.

My only hope, my only plea, Christ Jesus died and he died for me. And I preached to Dixie. And I preached that God saves souls upon the condition of repentance and faith.

And he does, and not a part of it. And she heard me. And then with what I thought was a wrench of a body that would kill her, she turned and faced the wall.

Never such heartbreaking wrecking of a body did I hear and watch as she literally sobbed in agony with her face turned toward the wall. And I sat there and said to her, I didn't know what on God's earth to do. And then she turned back to me.

You mean to tell me there isn't hell? You mean to tell me God don't let folks see a picture where they're going? The scripture I know says you won't have to cross Jordan alone if your scripture, that song's scripture. And it's also said for lost men. You mean to tell me there's a hell? Not a hell.

I saw it mirrored on her face. You mean to tell me when destiny comes that you'll be brave if you have no hope, nor shall you be scared. And she turned to me and she said, Preacher, I can't repent.

And she died. I can't repent. And she died.

I can't repent. I can't come clean with God. I can't take my place as a sinner.

I can't own myself to be under just condemnation. I can't claim only thing, only one thing. And that is that I'm vile.

The gospel says he's precious. You're living in a day now when the millions who are still alive and will go to work tomorrow morning. This preacher is afraid.

I've reached the place, not on their deathbeds, when they can't repent either. That time when a space was given for repentance and the mercy and providence of God. Those times when God held back his awful judgment and the lightning lightened up the pathway and men were confronted with the living Lord.

And they deliberately turned their back and went the other way. Those times are in the past. Now there's no lightning crossing the path of men and women as they're plunging their blindness toward the chasm of eternal hell and God's judgment.

Dixie said, I can't repent. And Dixie, if this book tells the truth, went out to another experience, when she'd experienced what the Bible calls the second death. That awful thing the scripture says don't let it hurt you.

If you've got ears to hear, hear, he said. If you do, the second death won't hurt you. That death is not of the tissues of this body, not when the brain quits functioning, not after a while we're learning when the heart quits beating.

But the second death, spiritual, eternal, the final page is on the wages of sin. The experience in its awful finality of the sin of God cast on every human being under the garden, dying thou shalt surely die. These verses say Ralph Barnard's dying.

My body's pretty well riled. Ralph Barnard's dying. But praise the Lord for the hope of the resurrection, for the fellowship of the living Lord.

Praise God I've found the hiding place, and I rejoice in the hope I'll not be hurt of the second death. The Bible says three things about this awful second death, its eternal banishment from the very presence of God. To you who are troubled, Paul said, rest with us.

When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his angels of might, inflaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. That's so awful I can't even talk about it. To be banished for all eternity.

No wonder they make fun of the Bible now. No wonder it's for the folks who way back yonder may be a little dumb for not buying smart people. Because if it's so, many women who go out through physical death into the hands of a Christ holy God are in for being excommunicated from the very presence of God.

The Bible says of the second death that it's an eternal dying. Mark chapter 9 has a word, I don't know exactly what it means, but it says every man shall be salted, preserved with fire. I reckon that means that you'll be in a state of death, but you'll never die.

Eternal death. The Bible speaks of the second death as being cast into the lake of fire. Is that just a picture? I guess so, I don't know.

But it's awful. You mean to tell me you're still dumb enough to believe that nice people good to their neighbors, not responsible for their own birth, not able to decide when they're going to die? You mean to tell me folks like that? You mean to tell me somebody will pick them up? Forcibly? While they scream? My Lord said, when He sends those fellas and they start harvesting this outfit, He said they're going to be

weeping and wailing. I tell you, that's rough.

I would just throw that old Bible away, I would, if it wasn't a graveyard around here pretty soon, pretty close. I would! If I didn't know by every ache of my body and tiredness of my brain that I'm dying. I can't throw faith before the throwaway.

The only book that tells me that there's something on the other side. And that for those who've been able to find rest in Jesus Christ, that something on the other side is the bliss of glory and the companionship of God. It's the lake of fire, or it's the new Jerusalem.

It's the comfort of God, or it's the torment of hell. It's crossing the river Jordan, praising God. Or it's going out into the hands of a living God, who alone has power.

But God helped with His power, He has determination. The C-E-S-T casts people into the lake of fire. When old T.T. Martin lay dying on the second floor of the Baptist Hospital in Jackson, Mississippi, everybody that could move got up on the second floor.

Every orderly and doctor and nurse and patient that could walk, hobble on crutches or go in a wheelchair. That hospital almost suspended operation for several hours, crowded in the corridors and rooms of the second floor of the Baptist Hospital in Jackson, Mississippi, to hear old man T.T. Martin die. He had a little piping voice for youngsters who never heard him.

And here's how he died. He died singing on Jordan. Oh, I cast a wish for that.

And he sang, No fool will come and go with me. Where my possessions lie, I am bound for the promised land. This is the hope of the child of God.

This isn't a joke. This is so serious. This world hasn't done anything like this.

My soul! Tell me you're going to keep on joining hands and giving comfort to the enemies of hell, trying to rob this preacher of his hope. You ain't going to do it, brother. You're just going to split hell wide open for being an enemy.

An only child in your own self. But of everybody you know. 30 odd years ago, we had a den in Texas.

We took the body of our only child, put her there in a seminary, in a cemetery. Wife and I have never seen that grave but once. About 37 years since she's been gone.

She's three and a half years old. Oh, God knows. Hallelujah! What a privilege to be in a holy war when all hell seems to pop against us, when the tide seems to go in the other direction.

Hallelujah for the privilege! What little I weigh to join hands with every blood-blood-blood redeems child of blood-stained Jesus. And tell this generation you're not going to rob us of the hope of the resurrection. No, sir.

You're not going to do it. Come on, you little smart-aleck. You're going to lose.

Come on and bring all your doubts. I got 10,000 times more than you got. Come on with all of your alibis.

They're no good. In the face of the fact that you're headed right straight toward the grave and that that grave opens up eternity for good or bad. Dr. J. Frank Norris preached the funeral of our little baby girl.

I told you a story. He started to preach it but all he could do was cry and 3,000 people followed by and looked at the little baby. Beautiful.

Because she was ours. And that preacher, he couldn't preach. He just bawled and said, I can't talk.

And then we followed that little white casket out to the cemetery and that afternoon after the funeral in the morning we went. Wife and I slipped away. Went out and already the flowers were withering under the hot summer sun.

She knelt on one side of the grave and I left all another. And us men ain't worth killing. God ought to just kill us and get us out of business anyhow.

Once in a while you find a woman seems like got more sense than we've got. She had more than I did. She looked up into my face.

We're just kids. And she, through the tears, said, honey, Patty Sue's not here. She's with the Lord.

She's with the Lord. Got that out of here, brother. Got that out of here because God knowing that Christ died of course men had to die.

God knowing people had faced him out yonder and that eternity is not a picnic or a joke. It's a fact. God did something about it.

Amen. Oh, we're in a fight now. We can't win it with weapons of the flesh.

But if our hearts burn within us because by experience we've entered in to these drained benefits of the love of God in turning his son on, his back on a world that hope might be born, that the steam might be taken out of death, that glory would yet conquer, it's appointed unto man once to die. So Christ came and died. It's appointed unto man to come to the judgment.

So Christ came and died. And you desperately need to run to Christ before you bow your head. I wish you'd fever the preacher this morning briefly.

I wish every eye to close. And I wonder how many people here this morning you have a reasonable hope that you belong to Christ. He's yours and you're his.

But to somebody here this morning you have every reason to believe not in Christ. You know who they are. You're burdened about them.

I'd like to see the Christians that know somebody in this service that you believe to be on his road to hell and to judgment. I want to ask you to do something for me. I'd like to see you lift your hand.

If you're a Christian, there's somebody in this service that you believe lost. In the enemy camp, lift your hands, Christian. Let's see.

A little higher so I can see. Our Father, give us, give us a spirit of travail right now. Lord, I wish you knew how to beg people.

These who lifted their hands, I won't turn them over to you, but ask them to intercede now and not quench the spirit. Now as we come to this awful moment when we always tremble, when we know that life's just a bundle of decisions and that people will do things here right now. And the next minute it just scared me to

death, Lord.

But it's worth it because of the hope of the gospel. I pray that you'll be kind, touch people, woo people, constrain people, enable people right now to close with the Christ of the gospel. Oh God, please do it.

I wonder if you'd stand, nobody leave, nobody put on a coat, nobody whisper. You honor the preacher's request. This is a desperate moment.

Let everybody stand, will you please? In Christ's name I stand here and beg you to be reconciled to God. Don't go away from this building without seeking the Lord. Don't you do it.

Please don't do it. We stand here to pray with you. We'd help you if we knew how.

Don't wait till you get stuck. I've got about five breaths left, I've seen so much of that. Run toward God in Jesus Christ.

Unashamedly say, I need Jesus. I desperately need Him. And I come as a seeker.

That person standing next to you, maybe on his road to hell, pray for him. Pray for him. Here I stand, I want to shake your hand.

Run to Christ. Come down here and say, I must get to Jesus. I must get to Jesus.

I must. I must. I must and I will.

This choir is going to start with the same passion, you know those gentlemen say. Yes, your beloved pastor is a poor evangelist. But beg him, walk an hour.

Say, I'm a seeker. I must come to know Christ. I must run from the wages of sin.

I must fly to Jesus Christ. I'm going to do it right now, come on. Bow and sing.

We bow and we sing.

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